

Week two

Psychology



An Examination of Aging Here Here Here Here An Examination of Aging

Response to Question One unavoidable aspect of life is the process of aging.

Every human experiences aging for as long as they are alive, albeit at varying rates. Many parts of the world are entering an age of exponential increase in the old-age population, creating the need to account for mass retirement and support concerns. A comparison and contrast of perceptions toward the elderly in Japanese and American societies may allow for insight into the future faced by the aging population.

According to a 2011 study by Karasawa and colleagues, elders in Japanese society experience a higher quality of personal growth than their American counterparts and midlife members of their own culture. This difference may be attributed to traditional Japanese belief systems (Taoism, Buddhism, Confucian) and their emphasis on aging as a natural maturing process rather than something to be feared. In contrast, American views toward aging tend to place it in a negative light in comparison to the emphasis on social contribution through employment that is often associated with the "American Dream".

The same article identifies a commonality in the experiences of American and Japanese elders. In both cultures, old age participants reported a lower sense of purpose in life than the younger population. Suggestions offered for this finding include the "lag theory" which posits the failure of social institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) to adequately prepare for the increased life spans and numbers of aged members in their societies. An additional possibility is that maintaining a strong sense of purpose in life is a difficult challenge for elders across multiple cultural settings, or perhaps just those that are more technologically advanced. Further research would be required

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to clarify these relationships.

Reference

Karasawa, M., Curhan, K. B., Markus, H. R., Kitayama, S. S., Love, G. D.,

Radler, B. T., &

Ryff, C. D. (2011). Cultural perspectives on aging and well-being: A

comparison of

Japan and the United States. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 73(1), 73-98.

Response to Question 2

Though medicine has significantly improved over time, the elderly still face a number of serious healthcare issues. As mentioned above, a primary concern may be the preparedness of the healthcare system to handle an influx of aged patients in addition to a regularly expanding life expectancy.

Insufficient space, equipment, and staff could prove to be disastrous for patient outcomes as resources are stretched beyond reason. As regular users of these resources, elderly members of society will suffer a reduced quality of care and ultimately life.

A second medical challenge the old-age population faces is the increase of resistant infections. In the evolutionary tug-of-war between medicine and infective agents, the edge has been steadily shifting to the microscopic invaders due to the overuse of antibiotics and the resultant increase in resistant organisms (Bennett, 2012). As one of the most vulnerable sectors of society (along with infants), the elderly stand to suffer the most as a result of these superbugs.

Reference

Bennett, C. M. (2012). Antibiotic resistance: emergence of the superbugs.

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Issues, 74, 22-24.

Response to Question 3

Fortunately, it is not all bad news for the elder population. The average American lifespan hovers near 78 years old and has consistently increased for decades. The needs of the elderly have not been completely ignored, and medical science has offered several advancements that support longevity and quality of life. Improvements in pharmaceutical research have aided in the reduction of suffering experienced by many patients, especially the vulnerable elderly. Management of common afflictions like high blood pressure and cholesterol has had a positive influence on longevity in general.

Medical technology has delivered a host of assistive devices that benefit older patients in particular. Hearing aids, glasses, lifts, and pacemakers are just a few examples of the devices that continue to be improved (while still others are invented) and greatly assist in the prolongation of a quality life. There also includes the possibility of full-fledged robots becoming personal care workers (Broekens, Heerink, and Rosenday, 2009), which may alleviate the strain on medical human resources faced by the aged population.

Reference

Broekens, J., Heerink, M., & Rosendal, H. (2009). Assistive social robots in elderly care: a review. *Gerontechnology*, 8(2), 94-103.